

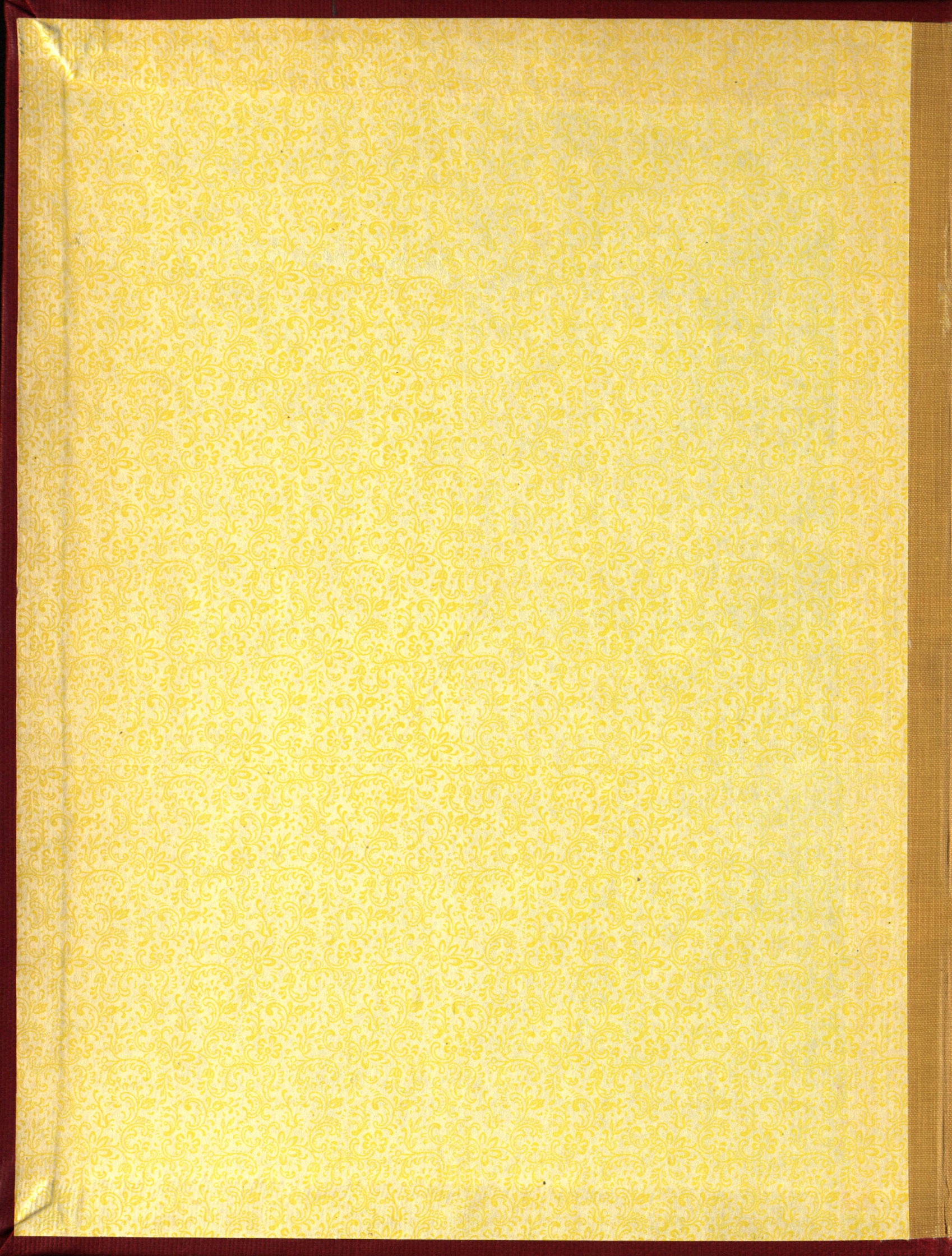
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1875-1886

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THE CLASSICAL PERIOD
NEW YORK
OF

RENOIR

4th to 24th November, 1929


1841-1919

KNOEDLER & COMPANY

14 EAST 57th STREET, NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

“ENOIR at his best” might well have been the title of this introductory note, but Messrs. Knoedler and I have preferred to assume a more impartial attitude, especially as, in our capacity as dealers, such a confident declaration might well be considered interested.

But the public—visitors, critics and students—when it pronounces its judgment on the choice of pictures presented here for its verdict, will without any doubt admit that such a claim would have been well justified. None the less, we have decided to call the present exhibition “The Classical Period of Renoir,” by which we mean the works of the Master that were painted between two exact dates, chosen for logical and historic reasons.

Renoir’s work was, certainly up to about 1875, in an experimental stage. From 1867 to 1870 he is, consistently, under the influence of Courbet. For some years after this, his work will be found to possess a certain dryness, the consequence of his occupation in the Sèvres factory.

After 1890, on the other hand, the artist shows a complete change in his work, the blues that had so powerfully prevailed over his palette depart, and their place is taken by rose and carmine. The drawing is, seemingly, less nervous: the study of volume and mass ever fills a more important place in the artist’s mind, till, at last, his work unfolds itself in a splendour that few artists can hope to achieve.

These ten years, 1875 to 1886, therefore, to which belong all the works shown here, may be considered as the *classical period* of Renoir.

Every picture of this period shows that all his energies directed towards the study of ambient atmosphere, naturalism and truth, had, at last, achieved not only life but *joy*. In their drawing, their spiritual characteristics, their colour, they draw nearer to the school of the French eighteenth century. Before all things a painter of women, whom he sees, always, clothed in multitudinous charms, Renoir resumes the art of Watteau, Lancret and Pater, classic as they are classic.

And yet, seeking always, with his contemporaries—Sisley, Monet, Manet, Degas—the solution of pictorial problems, æsthetic as well as technical, he is above all *modern*.

In his reaction against one of the weaknesses of Impressionism, Renoir recaptured the full sense of form in the imaginative exaltation of his colours. Realising to the full, and mastering the sense of volume, he showed the reverence that is due to great classical composition. He understood what Seurat later was to consider his proudest preoccupation: discipline and logic. He is the natural link between Monet and

Cezanne. Monet who spoke of air and light, Cezanne who proclaimed volume and composition, and if, at the present time, the school of Paris turns so often to the example of Delacroix, Renoir may well stand, with his allies Matisse and Dufy, as an inspiration to those who love light, and creative genius.

It is, therefore, possible for us to say here, without fear of contradiction, that if Renoir had not made these discoveries, the brilliant constellation of French artists that is at the present time the pride of the School of Paris, Matisse, La Fresnaye, Picasso, R. Dufy, Braque, Modigliani, Utrillo, Lurçat, Rouault, would not have been able to give free play to the joy of freedom, the vivid sense of colour, the power of invention that are the dominating characteristics of their art.

Immortal painter of women, he is represented here only by feminine subjects in what is a selection of celebrated pictures, not an exhibition in the usual sense of the word, but a choice of *masterpieces*. We use this word which has been of late years a great deal abused, to comprehend the result of an indefatigable connoisseurship, æsthetic discrimination, and a combination of greatness and rarity. In showing it to the American public for the first time, we think we have served the cause of Art itself, and particularly impressionism whose achievements have recast the laws of painting, and whose teaching has at the same time given freedom to the existing school for unimpeded development, renewing human thought on a base broadly and freshly laid.

May every lover of Art take away from its manifestation presented here, the firm conviction that Renoir with many of his contemporaries is a painter of moving genius, ranking equally with all those painters whose names are enshrined in the Pantheon of Glory.

ETIENNE BIGNOU.

AN APPRECIATION OF "RENOIR" BY MR. CARROLL CARSTAIRS

(Reproduced from "APOLLO," London, July, 1929.)



RENOIR is the flower in the button-hole of art. His painting has the gaiety, the colour, and something of the surface and texture of a flower. This is no fancy of mine; he actually studied flowers with a view to obtaining flesh tones. "En quittant l'atelier, je m'arretai devant des roses ébauchées. Ce sont, me dit Renoir, des recherchés de tons de chair que je fais pour un nu." Not only does Renoir suggest flowers, but flowers may suggest Renoir. I have looked at Tulips with the comparison in mind and observed a similar sheen on both Renoir and tulip, the same wax-like texture on a Renoir and a lily. The little curved brush strokes, too, give a flower-like sense of design and contour. His colour is essentially flower-like—"Nous qui mettions vraiment des couleurs sur des toiles et qui . . . cherchions à peindre avec des tons joyeux . . ." No doubt his early painting on porcelain contributed to this. The shiny plate and the little flowers thereon must have lingered in his sensibilities. In any event, there is no painting like his in all the world—a painting which is little less than a miraculous scattering of the minute particles of petals to make a perfect pattern.

It is easy to appreciate why, of all painters, Renoir was the supreme painter of women. His very attitude toward women explains while it proclaims this. "Mademoiselle Samary. Quelle charmante fille c'était ! Et quelle peau elle avait ! Positivement, elle éclairait autour d'elle." With a deft facility at simile we say, "So-and-so is like a flower," but here are women composed of the substance of flowers—flowers which have known rain and sunshine and have bloomed into healthy and happy womanhood because of both. How well Renoir understood them ! He sought after all that which was essentially feminine. "Moi, ce que j'aime dans la femme, c'est le charme féminin, et si rare !"

"L'Ingénue" is one of the most enchanting creations imaginable. She gazes at you with finger on lip. You take in her fair young face, while at the same time you wonder at the thoughts that tremble between childhood and maidenhood. She is so innocent and naïve, and yet just sufficiently grown-up to show a hint of mischief in her glance—you are not quite sure whether you wish she were your daughter or whether you might fall in love with her. Another picture belonging to this period (1869 to 1883) is "La Femme aux Lilas." The lavender of the flowers is reflected in her dress; she leans forward ever so slightly, for their perfume has already filled the room. She shares their beauty and their bloom, their colour and their fragrance, and, alas ! their sweet transiency. In "Le Bal du Moulin de la Galette" (the small picture done on the spot before the painting of the big one in the Louvre) there is a happy blending of everything that is Renoir at his best—colour and movement, youth and beauty, the component parts of joy; they are all there, with something more, that something which is Renoir, and Renoir alone—a magical recreation, a vigorous if fleeting realization, the high-water mark of impression truly conveyed.

Renoir's pictures are intimate records of his own days—joyous, sunny days at St. Cloud, Versailles, and Argenteuil, La Fournaise and La Grenouillère; evenings at the theatre, and dancing at the Moulin de la Galette, and in the end rather too many days in the studio. "Pourquoi veut-on que je refasse la Loge puisque j'ai trouvé autre chose ?" he said rather testily to those who did not like to see him alter. But I venture to agree with them. I would have had more loges and fewer nudes.

Perhaps it is all due to the transition from youth to age; for his early pictures embody in plastic form, in terms of pigment, the very essence of youth. They let you into a secret—the marvellous secret which belongs to youth alone, that secret which is the pure joy of living, that "joie de vivre" which is the particular inheritance of youth and health and beauty, of sunny days and holidays in the Bois and along the Seine. It has naught to do with the spirit. It is all flesh and blood, but flesh of the sweetest and dancing blood that brings a ready blush to fair young face and spreads a radiance over all.

"Positivement, il éclairait autour de lui" !

I.

✓ "MADAME HENRIOT EN TRAVESTI"

Canvas : $63\frac{1}{2} \times 41$ inches.

Signed on the right.

Painted : 1875-76.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by Albert André (G. Crès & Cie., Publishers, Paris, 1923). Plate 8.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by Albert André (G. Crès & Cie., Publishers, Paris, 1928). Plate 9.

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram, Paris.



II.

✓ “L'ENFANT A L'ARROSOIR ”

Canvas : $39\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
Signed on the right and dated 76.
Painted at Vargemont.

From the collection of Monsieur Paul Bérard, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur A. Rosenberg, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram, Paris.



Ⅴ III.

Ⅴ "LE MOULIN DE LA GALETTE"

Canvas : 31 × 45 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

Signed on the right and dated 76.

Mentioned in "Renoir" by Gustave Coquiot (Albin Michel, Publisher, Paris, 1925). Page 225.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by G. Meier-Graefe (Klinkhardt und Biermann, Publishers, Leipzig, 1929). Plate 68, Page 90 (wrongly described as being the picture in the Luxembourg Museum).

Exhibited at the "Burlington House," London, 1906.

From Madame Choquet's sale, Paris, July, 1899 (Reproduced as No. 88 of the catalogue).

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram, Paris.



IV.

✓ "L'INGENUE"

Canvas : 22 × 18½ inches.

Signed on the right.

Painted about 1876-77.

Reproduced in "Apollo," London, July, 1929.

From the collection of the late J. Horace Harding, Esq.



V.

✓ "LA FEMME AUX LILAS"

Canvas : 29 × 23½ inches.

Signed on the right.

Painted in 1877.

Reproduced in colours in "Renoir Album," by Octave Mirbeau, Paris, 1913.

Reproduced in "l'Art Moderne" (Bernheim-jeune & Cie., Publishers, Paris, 1919). Plate No. 106.

Reproduced in "Douze cartes postales d'après les Œuvres les plus célèbres de Renoir" (Editions d'Art Bernheim-jeune, Paris).

Reproduced in "Scottish Country Life," May, 1929.

Reproduced in "Sphere," London, July, 1929.

Mentioned in "Renoir" by Gustave Coquiot (Albin Michel, Publisher, Paris, 1925). Page 225.

Exhibited at "Cinquante Ans de Peinture Française" Pavillon de Marsan, Louvre Museum, Paris, 1925. No. 65 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Cinquante Renoir" Paris, February, 1927.

Exhibited at "Exposition de Peintures de l'Ecole Impressionniste et Néo-Impressionniste" Lucerne, February, 1929. No. 14 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Ten Masterpieces by Nineteenth Century French Painters," Glasgow, April, 1929. No. 6 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Masterpieces by Nineteenth Century French Painters," London, June, 1929. No. 5 of the catalogue.

From the collection of Monsieur Balaceano, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram. Paris, 1906.



VI.

✓ "LA SOURCE"
(Madame Henriot)

Canvas: $51\frac{1}{4} \times 28\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
Signed on the right.
Painted 1877-78.

Reproduced in "Renoir et ses amis" by Georges Rivière (H. Floury, Publisher, Paris, 1921). Page 49.

Mentioned in "Renoir" by Gustave Coquiot (Albin Michel, Publisher, Paris, 1925). Page 224.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by G. Meier-Graefe (Klinkhardt und Biermann, Publishers, Leipzig, 1929). Plate 71, Page 79.

From the collection of Messieurs Durand-Ruel, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram, Paris.



VII.

✓ "LA SONGEUSE"

Canvas: 24 × 19½ inches.

Signed on the left and dated '79.

Reproduced in "Apollo," London, July, 1929.

From Monsieur Paul Bérard's sale, Paris, May, 1905. (Reproduced as No. 19 of the catalogue.)

From the collection of Mr. C. S. Carstairs.



VIII.

✓ "DANS LES ROSES"

(Portrait de Madame Clapisson)

Canvas : $39\frac{1}{2} \times 31\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Signed on the right and dated 82.

Reproduced in "Les Arts" (Paris, August, 1912. No. 128).

Reproduced in "Renoir Album," by Octave Mirbeau, Paris, 1913.

Reproduced in "l'Art Moderne" (Bernheim-jeune & Cie., publishers, Paris, 1919). Plate 110.

Reproduced in "Douze cartes postales d'après les Œuvres les plus célèbres de Renoir" (Editions d'Art Bernheim-jeune, Paris).

Reproduced in colours in "Scottish Country Life," May, 1929.

Reproduced in colours in "The Studio," London, July, 1929.

Reproduced in colours in "Apollo," London, July, 1929.

Exhibited at "Exposition d'Art Moderne" (Hotel de la revue "Les Arts," Paris, 1912).

Exhibited at "Exposition Renoir," Paris, March, 1913. No. 23 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Exposition d'Œuvres des XIX^e & XX^e Siècles." Paris, June-July, 1925. No. 103 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Cinquante Renoir," Paris, February, 1927.

Exhibited at "Exposition de Peintures de l'Ecole Impressionniste et Néo-Impressionniste," Lucerne, February, 1929. No. 15 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Ten Masterpieces by Nineteenth Century French Painters," Glasgow, April, 1929. No. 5 of the catalogue.

Exhibited at "Masterpieces by Nineteenth Century French Painters," London, June, 1929. No. 4 of the catalogue.

From the collection of Mrs. Spencer, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur Georges Petit. Paris, 1911.



IX.

✓ "PORTRAIT DE MADEMOISELLE DEMAREZ"

Canvas : 24 × 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

Signed on the right.

Painted about 1884-85.

Reproduced in "Apollo," London, July, 1929.



X.

✓ "BAIGNEUSES DANS LA FORET"

Canvas : $29\frac{1}{2} \times 40$ inches.
Signed on the left.
Painted about 1885-86.

Reproduced in "Renoir, peintre du nu" (Bernheim-jeune et Cie., Publishers, Paris, 1923). Plate 12.

Mentioned in "Renoir" by G. Coquiot (Albin Michel, Publisher, Paris, 1925). Page 230.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by G. Meier-Graefe (Klinkhardt und Biermann, Leipzig, 1929). Plate, 256, Page 265.

Repr. "The Arts", Nov. 1929, n. 177.
Exhibited at "L'Exposition de Venise," 1910.

From the collection of Monsieur A. Pellerin, Paris.

From the collection of Messrs. Bernheim-jeune, Paris.

From the collection of Monsieur le Prince de Wagram, Paris.



XI.

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"MADAME RENOIR ALLAITANT SON ENFANT"

Canvas : $31\frac{1}{2} \times 25\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Signed on the right.

Painted 1886.

Reproduced in "Renoir" by G. Meier-Graefe (Klinkhardt und Biermann, Publishers, Leipzig, 1929). Plate 187, Page 247.

Mentioned in "Renoir" by Gustave Coquiot (Albin Michel, Publisher, Paris, 1925). Page 228.

From the collection of Monsieur Ambroise Vollard, Paris.



